Citizens Of Hell

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There are two things that can be said of Elchin Afandiyev: you will probably not have heard of him; you will be hearing a lot more about him in the future.

23/07/13 - 24/07/13, 27/07/13 (by invitation only)
Elchin's
Citizens of Hell
As the Nazi political storm brews in Europe during the late 1930's, and the horror of Stalinist public denunciation, not to mention apparently random arrests, reduce the city of Baku to paranoia, a wife awaits her husband's homecoming to celebrate the New Year.
Doors open at 19:30!
Theatro Technis (26 Crowndale Road, London, NW1 1TE)

David Parry is a multi-talented individual, and when I attended, by invitation, a viewing of *Citizens Of Hell* Tuesday night, he was wearing his producer's hat. Over the past few years, Parry has been nurturing cultural ties with the government of Azerbaijan, a country that has existed in its own right since only 1991.

Like Parry, Elchin Afandiyev is a multi-talented individual, a politician as well as a playwright, and this performance of his play *Citizens Of Hell* at Theatro Technis was a world first: the first time it had ever been performed either in the West or in English.

Community theatre is not for everyone, nor is *Citizens Of Hell* because it requires at least a superficial knowledge of one of the darkest periods of 20th Century history outside of its frequent wars, namely the Soviet Union under Stalin, in particular the denunciations and show trials which, contrary to what some continue to claim, was not a myth.

The play has only three characters: a husband and wife, and a mysterious visitor to their 5th floor apartment on New Year's Eve 1937-8.

The play actually begins and ends with an art slide show set to music; there is a dialogue at the dinner table between the couple, then the stranger appears, and the wife recognises him for who he is at once, the Devil. That doesn't stop her lending a hand when her husband attempts to strangle him, but after two resurrections there can be no doubt

Why would they resort to such violence? Because he tells them both some uncomfortable home truths about their respective roles in denouncing people to the authorities, and produces a letter the husband had written to Comrade Stalin himself.

Old Nick's physical manifestation is hardly a new theme of course, it can be found in both literature and films including *The Devil's Advocate* and ten years earlier in *Angel Heart*, but there is nothing as covert as either of those appearances here.

How does the story end? That would be telling, suffice it to say, the Devil is the only good guy in this two act play. The role is filled by Dominic O'Flynn, who currently has five entries in the *IMDb*. Expect to see a lot more in future.

Members of the public are invited to the Saturday performance, when they might just meet some bigwigs from the government of Azerbaijan.

All is not happy on the 5th floor, thanks to the uninvited guest. Andrew Boxer and Priscilla Fere star in the first ever English presentation of *Citizens Of Hell*.

Dominic O’Flynn lets rip as the Devil himself in *Citizens Of Hell*.

The Devil himself can quote scripture when it suits him, and here in *Citizens Of Hell* he is telling his captive audience some home truths.

[The above article was first published July 25, 2013. One or two very small errors have been corrected here. A larger scan of the card at the top of the page was added to the theatre programmes page of *The David Webb Virtual Archive & Fan Site*.]